

much will be required. Well might David exclaim, "Cast me not off in time of old age." Cast me not from thy directing and supporting care, and forsake me not in the times of weakness and perplexity. Who can do without God? He is the guide of his people. "If thy presence go not with us," etc.

Without Christ we can do nothing. He must strengthen and uphold. Cast me not off in seasons of sorrow and infirmity and forsake me not in the day of darkness and trouble. Cast me not off from thy forbearing regards and forsake me not on account of my unworthiness. We all need God's forbearing regards; but when we can do nothing, when we seem useless in the world, then we are in danger of desponding, of writing bitter things, etc. "Cast me not off when my flesh faileth, and forsake me not in the valley and shadow of death." When flesh and heart fail, we shall especially need God's help. What reason has the aged child of God to expect God to answer his prayers? From the nature of God's divine love, the source and medium of God's love cannot change. Elias prayed and it rained not; Again he prayed and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. Jacob dying in peace and exclaiming, "I have waited for thy salvation" behold David and as the power of sense and reason weaken, the visions of prophecy brighten, and he utters the 72nd Psalm and concludes with verse 18, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things." Simeon said in old age, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou has prepared before the face of all people." Comfort the aged, and especially the old preachers, warn the aged sinner, etc.

#### Personal Communion With God

The Congregationalist.

This is the secret of spiritual growth and even of spiritual life. To become a Christian is to enter into it consciously. Those who are not Christians, but are aware of an inner restlessness and longing, bidding them pay heed to the welfare of the soul and to identify themselves with the work of uplifting and saving humanity, really are but becoming aware, more or less consciously, of their need of personal communion with God. And when once the consciousness of this communion has been established in the heart life is different forever after. It may be allowed to become dim, but what it is never can be forgotten, and what its possibilities are never can be estimated.

It often is difficult to be maintained. The cares of daily life, the temptations which beset even the best of us, the vicissitudes of everyone's experience, the bewilderments and anxieties which harass even the most carefully sheltered life, all cooperate to interfere between our heavenly Father and ourselves. They take off our attention from Him, and seek to focus it on worldly inter-

ests. Sometimes they even tempt us to believe that communion with him is but a dream. Yet, if once we have known it, nothing ever can wholly blot out the conviction of its genuineness and power. The richest blessings of life are due to it. We may not attain the success for which men commonly strive. Wealth may not come to us, culture may not be attained, honors may pass us by. We may not be able to feel ourselves even conspicuously useful in our own spheres. Positive disappointments and distresses may harass us, grave disasters may crush for the time; yet, whatever happens, the soul that has once known true communion with God is able in and through it, and in spite of every hindrance, whether of prosperity or adversity, to keep in touch, if it will, with its Father.

#### Petty Criticism of the Preacher

Ian Maclaren.

No atmosphere is so injurious to the hearer, and so trying to the preacher, as petty criticisms and malicious interpretation. People ought to hear in a large and generous spirit, remembering that the preacher is a man of like frailties with themselves, and remembering that no man ought to be judged except on the length and breadth of his teaching. It is possible that one day he may be dull—it is a matter of the weather; it is possible another day that he may not be sweet-tempered—it is a matter of digestion; the hearers ought to make great allowances for one who has to work with the double instrument of a fickle mind and an imperfect body. Hearers should remember that no man ever can be equal, except he travel on the plane of dreary commonplace.

#### About Restless People

THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

When the last national census was taken, it would have been an interesting question to have asked just how many people were *where* they wanted to be. I fear that the really contented souls would have been a very small minority. Contentment with one's spiritual condition is quite too common; and of such low-grade Christians there is not much hope of improvement. But those who are really contented with their present lot, present place of residence, present circumstances or fields of labor, are not in the majority. Take, for example, the ministers of the gospel and see how many will say: "Well, my place of labor has *peculiar* difficulties; it is a hard field, and I have a great deal to encounter, and if I could get a first-rate call to some better place I would be off in a minute." Very probably you would. But, my good brother, if you would discover any parish on this round globe that has not some "peculiar difficulties" to encounter, then you will not have found a people so perfect that they will not need any preaching. Mary Lyon's noble advice to her pupils at Mount Holyoke Seminary was: "When you choose your field of labor for Christ, go where nobody else is willing to go." Heaven

is the only place I know of where there is no hard work or no difficulties.

My first parish was a very discouraging one, and I was just threatening to play Jonah and leave it when the Lord poured out his Spirit on the little flock and we had a revival that taught me more than six months did in a theological seminary. Many years afterward I was sorely harassed with doubt whether I should remain in a certain pulpit or go to a very inviting one nearly a thousand miles away. I opened Richard Cecil's "Remains"—a volume of most valuable thought—and my eyes fell on these pithy words: "Taking new steps in life are very serious dangers, especially if there be in our motives any mixture of selfish ambition. 'Wherefore gaddest thou about to change thy way?'" I turned up that text in the book of Jeremiah; it decided me not to gad about or change my field of labor, and I have thanked God for a decision that resulted in my happy thirty years' pastorate in Brooklyn. There are unquestionably times and circumstances in which a minister or any Christian worker should change his place of labor; but never under the promptings of a restless, discontented or self-seeking spirit.

The changes which we make in life from the motive of self-indulgence or of sheer restlessness are seldom changes for the better. A weary, bedridden sufferer begs to be moved into another room; but he carries his aches and pains with him. At this season of the year many people, to escape the troubles and taxes of the city, are fleeing away into the country which they picture to themselves as a paradise. But when they have been blockaded by snow and mud and have been deprived of their many religious and social privileges, they often get homesick for the town again. New troubles are to be encountered in the new place. In a hundred ways it is proved that happiness in this world does not depend on locality; it is not *where* we are, but *what* we are that determines our happiness. Therefore it is not a change of place or a change of circumstances that we need most; it is a change of *heart*. Our life "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which a man possesseth." Internals are more than externals. Some of the brightest Christians that I know manage to be very happy in a small house and on a very small income. Would that those ambitious worldlings who are all the time coveting and grasping and pulling down to build greater might learn that they never can satisfy their inmost souls by any such process! Money, style, luxury, fine equipage or high office never can satisfy any immortal soul that starves itself out of Jesus Christ! God never created a soul to be fed on husks.

It is not only the men of this world who are guilty of discontented restlessness. This unhappy spirit too often disturbs and dishonors those who profess and call themselves Christians. There is many a Christian who adopts the language of the ancient Psalmist: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest!" King